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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JEDDAH 000182

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HERRO MUSTAFA IN P

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [KISL](#) [KWMN](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: S/E CUMBER DISCUSSES WITH OIC DRAFT MOU;  
COOPERATION IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND EDUCATION

Classified By: Acting Consul General CB Toney for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d  
)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In April 24 meetings with Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and other high-level OIC officials, U.S. Envoy to the OIC Sada Cumber discussed the draft U.S.-OIC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as well as specific programs on which to collaborate. They agreed to cooperate in two of three areas outlined in the MOU -- science, technology, and education -- but delayed addressing enhancing the status of women. OIC officials said it would be better to focus on that issue after building OIC member state confidence in the U.S.-OIC relationship. Consistent with Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade's remarks (Septel Dakar), they expressed a desire for a fast, tangible example of success.

12. (C) In Special Envoy (S/E) Cumber's meeting with the Secretary General, Ihsanoglu reiterated his support for Mr.

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Cumber's appointment, praised the "unprecedented" U.S.-OIC relationship, and expressed desire to work on "technical," rather than "political," issues. In a subsequent, larger meeting, Mr. Cumber and OIC officials agreed to collaborate on the following projects and issues: a digital library project in the 10 poorest OIC member states, an innovation in the Muslim world mapping project, short-term vocational training for Muslim youth; and more generally, food security, energy security, disease eradication, and infant mortality rate reduction. They also agreed to facilitate more interfaith dialogue as well as to initiate an informal U.S.-OIC "exchange of views," or consulting, at the United Nations. END SUMMARY

IHSANOGLU DEEMS NEW U.S.-OIC RELATIONSHIP "UNPRECEDENTED"

13. (C) In U.S. Envoy to the OIC Sada Cumber's April 24 meeting with the OIC Secretary General, Ihsanoglu reiterated his support for Mr. Cumber stating: "No wonder this was the selection of the President." He also said he was pleased with how Mr. Cumber was developing his strategy toward strengthening U.S.-OIC relations. Elaborating on the new position of Envoy and the draft MOU, he added: "This is unprecedented, a new modus operandi," continuing, "I hope in six months you can build something tangible." (COMMENT: OIC Director General for Political Affairs Mahdy Fathallah expressed privately to Mr. Cumber the need for the MOU to produce quickly a concrete accomplishment to build confidence among OIC member states toward the U.S. END COMMENT.)

OIC CALLS FOR "TECHNICAL," RATHER THAN "POLITICAL" COOPERATION

14. (C) Regarding areas of cooperation, Ihsanoglu said that it was a "successful" decision to focus on "technical" rather than "political" matters. He also reiterated his support for the "Annapolis process" while adding that there will always be issues on which the U.S. and OIC disagree. Mr. Cumber provided Ihsanoglu with a copy of the draft U.S.-OIC MOU and Ihsanoglu said he would "study" it. Mr. Cumber also extended to Ihsanoglu an invitation to Washington to meet with the President, Secretary Rice, and other high-level officials, to which he replied: "That would be very nice."

KEY AREAS OF COLLABORATION: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND EDUCATION

15. (C) In a follow-on meeting with Ihsanoglu and OIC Political Affairs and Science and Technology Departments, S/E Cumber and OIC officials agreed to cooperate on science, technology, and education. On the enhancement of the status of women, several OIC officials said that it was too soon to focus on that issue. They recommended collaborating on the least contentious issues so as to produce quick tangible results and to build confidence among OIC member states toward the new U.S.-OIC relationship. After such a time, focusing on the issue of women would be more feasible, they argued.

16. (C) Concerning specific issues within science and technology, OIC officials highlighted the "Atlas of the World Innovation," which aims to map the Muslim world's innovation capability. OIC officials shared with Mr. Cumber brochures on the project and stated that they hoped to complete it no later than 2012. They also suggested that Mr. Cumber help facilitate a partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on disease eradication and infant mortality rate reduction, and provided him a copy of an Islamic Summit resolution calling for such cooperation.

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Finally, they also expressed interest in working on "food security" (food processing) and "energy security" (alternative energy sources for desertification alleviation).

17. (C) On education, Mr. Cumber shared his plans to establish a digital library in the 10 poorest OIC member states. OIC officials stated it was a "good" idea, and Ihsanoglu requested more information on the content of such libraries. S/E Cumber also discussed his desire to invite a group of OIC officials to the U.S. to travel to Washington, D.C. to meet U.S. Executive Branch officials, and then throughout the U.S. to meet the American Muslim community. OIC officials also supported that idea, adding that they were interested in opportunities to observe the upcoming U.S. Presidential elections as well as to receive training to monitor elections in Muslim countries. Last, OIC officials said that they would like to create 2-3 week vocational training opportunities for Muslim youth as it would aid in addressing the "immediate need" of employment and in reducing Muslim youth engagement with extremists.

IHSANOGLU RAISES ISLAMOPHOBIA, AGREES TO MORE INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

18. (C) Expanding on potential areas for U.S.-OIC cooperation, Ihsanoglu raised the issue of "creating a better understanding between the two side," citing the September 2007 program at Georgetown University in which he spoke about Islamophobia. After Mr. Cumber mentioned to Ihsanoglu his visit with Senegalese President Wade, he said: "Was there anything tangible out of it? I need to know, he is my boss." S/E Cumber informed him of Wade's call for interfaith dialogue and said that the U.S. also wishes to address improving how different faiths view one another. However, Mr. Cumber emphasized that "Freedom of speech is at the core of America" and that the U.S. will not support "any restrictions on it." Ihsanoglu replied, stating: "Freedom of

speech is not an absolute freedom; it goes hand-in-hand with responsibility."

#### OIC DESIRES INCREASED COORDINATION WITH U.S. AT THE UN

¶9. (C) S/E Cumber and Secretary General Ihsanoglu agreed on the need to facilitate an "exchange of views," or consulting, between the U.S. and the OIC so they are aware of one another's positions, in particular at the United Nations, regardless of whether they agree. The OIC officials present all agreed that this would be extremely useful. For example, OIC Advisor to the Secretary General Ufuk Gokcen stated that while they know the U.S. opposes the OIC's proposed Convention on Religious Defamation, they do not know why. Better coordination, he stated, would clear-up such misunderstandings. He then asked Mr. Cumber whether the U.S. -- "like the Europeans" -- could provide an issue paper explaining U.S. opposition to it.

¶10. (C) In response to Ihsanoglu's request that the U.S. facilitate visa issuance for OIC officials traveling to the UN General Assembly this Fall, Mr. Cumber shared with him from his conversation with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that DHS would treat fairly those OIC officials entering the U.S. (NOTE: Ihsanoglu also raised this issue during Mr. Cumber's March 4-5 Visit. END NOTE.)

#### OIC OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

¶11. (C) In addition to Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, OIC attendees included: Advisor to the Secretary General Ufuk Gokcen, Advisor to the Secretary General Ahmed Lajimi, Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology Dr. Ali A. Salehi, Director General for the Department of Science and Technology Dr. Razley bin Mohd, Director General of Political Affairs Mahdy Fathallah, and Director in Political Affairs Tariq Ali Bakheet.

#### COMMENT

¶12. (C) OIC reaction to S/E Cumber and plans to strengthen U.S.-OIC relations were markedly warmer than during his March visit. In sidebar conversations, OIC officials shared privately that Mr. Cumber's travel to the region and draft MOU have instilled a sense of guarded optimism toward strengthening U.S.-OIC relations. (Furthermore, Ihsanoglu in his second and final term as Secretary General now feels he has the mandate to push implementation of the OIC Ten-Year Program of Action, also a basis for the MOU.) However,

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sustaining this momentum will require that the OIC Secretariat - at times dysfunctional - pull together and

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follow through on their commitment to produce a deliverable at the earliest opportunity. END COMMENT.

¶13. (U) This cable was cleared by Special Envoy Sada Cumber.  
TONEY